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PRIORITY THEMES: EQUALITY

Equality in economic decision-making

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-fourth session, selected the issue "Equality in economic decision-making" as the priority theme under the rubric of "Equality" for consideration at its thirty-ninth session. Economic decisions, made by either private or public actors, determine both present and future economic performance and structures with obvious implications for everyone's daily life. Equal participation in the shaping of economic decisions implies that women will be integral parts of the processes and institutions involved in defining economic decisions and exercising economic power. Over the past 20 years the proportion and the rate of growth of economically active women have increased almost everywhere and in all sectors. Women are entering the third level of education, nearly closing the gap between men and women and diversifying their fields of study. Despite these trends, in the most visible way and regardless of the level of development or the economic, political and social systems, women are still largely absent from economic decision-making positions at the national and international levels. Furthermore, the issue of women's access to economic decision-making has been largely undebated. The linkages between the spheres of intervention and influence need to be stressed.

Based on an expert group meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, the present report seeks to present the main opportunities and constraints specifically faced by women and to suggest strategic actions to be taken in order to increase and improve their participation in economic decision making bodies and processes.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council established, by its resolution 1990/15, the priority themes for each session of the Commission on the Status of Women from 1993 to 1996. The theme for the thirty-ninth session under the objective of "Equality" is "Equality in economic decision-making". This theme was suggested by the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women 1/ to the year 2000, contained in the annex to Council resolution 1990/15. The Council stated that the participation of women in the economy continued to be unequal, characterized by job segregation, insufficient training opportunities, unequal pay for work of equal value, inadequate career prospects and lack of full participation in economic decision-making. Recommendation IV, flowing from those conclusions, suggested that:

> "The United Nations should study the incidence of women in economic decision-making world wide, analyse innovative national programmes to increase the proportion of women in economic decision-making positions and publicize the results, within existing resources."

2. In its resolution 48/108, the General Assembly called upon Member States to give priority to issues relating to the role of women in economic decision-making. In its resolution 35/4, the Commission on the Status of Women also decided to address that theme as one of the critical areas of concern for the advancement of women, world wide.

3. In conformity with the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/24, an expert group meeting on women and economic decision-making was convened in New York from 7 to 11 November 1994 to help prepare the theme paper. The meeting was attended by 16 experts from all regions, 7 observers from organizations of the United Nations system and 3 observers from non-governmental organizations. The meeting sought to define strategic actions to be taken in order to increase and improve the participation of women in economic decision-making bodies and processes. The experts considered the rationality for expanding women's impact on strategic economic decisions. The actual situation and trends were assessed for all the regions; the main leading or impeding factors related to these trends were analysed, and recommendations were made under the headings of leadership and management roles, transforming enterprise and financial systems, and women organizing for visibility and change.

4. The conclusions and recommendations suggested by the experts 2/ are presented as an annex to the present report. The other parts of the report are based on the background papers drafted by the Division for the Advancement of Women in preparing the Expert Group Meeting. 3/

FACTUAL BASIS AND MAIN ISSUES

A. Need for more women economic decision makers

5. There are many reasons for favouring the full and equal incorporation of women in economic decision-making. First, it is a matter of good economics and human resource management. Impeding women's achievement of their full potential is a waste of scarce skilled human resources, especially in developing countries. In developed countries there is a trend towards the reduction of the global supply of workers with third-level education because of demographic trends. Some countries have already made estimates of the future shortage of managers that they will face in the near future. Women could fill this gap. Moreover, because of their gender roles, women develop skills that are particularly appropriate for modern management. Increasing competition between enterprises has led to new styles of management based on adaptability and full use of all available resources. Women's ability to cooperative leadership, emphasis on quality, intuitive problem-solving and light control are actually highly valued by the new management culture, particularly in large private corporations.

6. Secondly, it is widely recognized that women's subordinated status and discrimination are linked and explained in considerable measure by women's very low share of economic and political power at all levels. Moreover, exclusion from policy-making and decision-making has made it difficult for women and women's organizations to include their preferences and interests in the largely male-dominated formal economic world. If development decisions and results are to become more accountable to women and responsive to their needs, there may be no short cut to women's full involvement in top economic decision-making.

7. Thirdly, women have equal rights with men to such participation. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which brings women into the focus of human rights concerns, spells out in 14 articles the right of women to full participation in public and private life and the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of that right.

B. Incidence of women in economic decision-making

8. Economic decision makers include persons occupying a wide variety of positions whose decisions can determine the direction of economic policy in the short and long terms. They include top executives of national public bodies dealing with economic matters; senior managers of public and private enterprises at national and international levels; entrepreneurs at various levels; senior managers of international and regional financial institutions; and members of boards of trade unions and professional and business organizations.

9. The review of the national case studies presented by the experts demonstrated, as already suggested by several other sources, that systematic investigation and documentation on this issue is relatively new, scanty, often country-specific and widely dispersed. However, a general conclusion from all of the studies is that women are underrepresented everywhere in places where male privileges tend to become institutionalized - in the boardrooms, cabinets,

business organizations, trade union headquarters and the executive suites of transnational corporations.

C. Career paths for women in corporate structures

10. Four general considerations regarding women managers need attention. In the first instance, it must be recognized that while the term "management" in abstraction may not be intrinsically biased, it is a bearer of discrimination against women in its institutional structure, organizational and behavioural norms, rules and regulations. Qualities such as aggressiveness, "hard-nosed" determination, competitiveness and drive, normally associated with "masculinity" are often the expected attributes of managers. This tends to render "management" male-biased in its recruitment, promotion procedures, management leadership, style and outcomes.

11. Secondly, a relatively high number of women may be gaining entry into management positions in general, but it is rarely at the top management levels. The quest for women's participation in management cannot be left simply at any level; it has to be pursued at all levels, and especially at the strategic top levels.

12. Thirdly, it is important to recognize the differences in the nature of responsibilities, authority and expectations which distinguish public- from the private-sector management. Public-sector management bears an additional requirement of wider social responsibilities. Furthermore, in many countries the public sector tends to be the major employer of women. It may therefore seem obvious that women's participation in management may be enhanced in the public sector and thus be a role model for the private sector.

13. Finally, a statistically guided profile of women in management may offer a useful general picture. In a more substantive way, however, until now all available information has contained serious distortions in qualitative and quantitative terms. Quantitative distortions occur due to the lack of standardized and universalized working definitions, classifications and categorization of management jobs. Qualitative distortions are caused by discriminatory features which are known to characterize women managers' careers even when they do gain upward mobility in management. For instance, top professional women do not benefit from all the advantages their male colleagues enjoy. Women tend to occupy a "second class" status, especially in highly paid and prestigious professions and areas of activity.

14. The available documented evidence suggests that, despite regional and sectoral variations, there is a slow rate of increase in the proportion of women managers relative to men. The increase has been linked to more women acceding to the third level of education, the growing entry of women into the labour market and their longer presence in it. However, it has also been noted that most of the actual pool of women managers is concentrated in very few sectors of activity, managing almost specific and peripheral-supportive functions, such as personnel and external relations, and stagnates at the lower and middle levels of management. Women managers also tend to be more present in the public sector than in the private sector.

15. Furthermore, it has also been noted that there is a huge gap between, on the one hand, the rates of participation and the increase of economically active women in the formal economy and, on the other, women in top management. Because of education and employment trends, it is suggested optimistically that the pool from which the next generation of managers is drawn will contain as many women as men. However, this will effectively lead to a greater access to top levels of management only if the structural barriers that impede the access of women managers (lower and middle level) to decisive positions can be surmounted.

16. Why are women so grossly underrepresented, so wastefully underutilized and so skewed in their distribution among the levels and sectors of management? Why there is such a large gap between the levels of women's participation in formal employment and in management positions? If women are availing themselves of employment opportunities, why is their rise to top management so slow? The explanations offered for this world-wide phenomena vary and have evolved in stages.

17. They operate in four stages, and passage through each stage is necessary for mobility upwards to the highest level of management.

18. The early gender-based socialization of girls and boys produces sex-role-differentiation which reinforces the existing division of labour between women and men. It then becomes "natural" for girls not to be educated or trained. If education or training is available for girls, it will be in areas such as domesticity and housekeeping, while boys will be trained in technical and commercial skills. Career choices are then guided by stereotyped ideas of gender-ascribed traits.

19. Third-level education and training are the most important stages in the preparation of women for a professional career. Even if, in many countries, women equal and sometimes outnumber men at the third level of education, in all countries, there is still a clear distinction between the fields of study of women and men. Women tend to choose areas such as the arts, education and other social fields, while men tend to concentrate in technical, commercial and managerial areas. In most cases, the factors that are impeding women's access to the third level of education are determined by attitudinal factors and linked to traditions and culture. A woman's choice of a field of study is affected by the basic attitudes and values of women and by the education system, which does not prepare women for leadership positions. The content of education, career guidance and counselling, which all tend to channel girls into traditional female fields, are suggested as the main mechanisms.

20. When women become educated and can gain access to entry-level jobs, they tend to remain clustered and compressed in the lower ranks and concentrated in women-dominated public bureaucracies and management organizations. Prejudices, of both women and men, about social roles, capabilities and behaviour become entrenched in employment recruitment policies and procedures, terms and conditions of employment. Women's choices tend also to be determined by their reproductive roles, limiting their access to potential career posts.

21. Obstacles to a woman's entry into a potential management career may be addressed through appropriate education and training programmes. However, once

in a potential management post, women are confronted with even harder, more subtle and diffused barriers which restrict their upward mobility. These factors are structural, such as employment rules, regulations and performance evaluation, and behavioural, such as exclusion from networks and training and lack of opportunities to travel and attend meetings. Both factors form the male corporate culture referred also as the "glass ceiling", an invisible but impassable barrier that prevents women from reaching top management, regardless of their education and experience.

22. Many of the barriers identified above continue to hound those very few women who do make it to the top. Faced with male-biased expectations, isolation and loneliness they have the choice of being either an "incompetent" woman manager or a pseudo-male superstar.

D. Women entrepreneurs

23. In most countries, women are beginning to emerge as entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs are making an increasingly important contribution to the total of new business start-ups and entering a wider range of business fields. Statistical data of the International Labour Office (ILO) on the category "employers and own account workers" describe those who could be entrepreneurs. Historically, men have been more likely to be economically independent than women. But, data also show that over the past 20 years, the gap between men and women has been narrowing, passing from 26 women for every 100 men in 1970 to 40/100 in 1990. 2/

24. A number of factors have facilitated the increase in women entrepreneurs. Access to education and training and a growing service sector are suggested as the leading factors. However, others such as female long-term unemployment in many developed countries and lack of perceived prospects for career advancement for women professionals blocked by the "glass ceiling" are also important.

25. Enterprises established by women face specific obstacles which, in large measure, derive from women's unequal status in society. Although women are entering business at a rapid rate, the majority of the women-owned businesses are new and operate in a precarious state.

26. Women entrepreneurs cite unavailability of capital as the biggest barrier to growth. Past discrimination, inheritance laws and practices, and property rights explain in most cases the lack of collateral available to most women. Moreover, lack of information, inexperience in negotiating and in many cases the small size of women-owned businesses create considerable barriers between most financial institutions and women. Finally, in some countries, banking laws and procedures have not been modified to remove discriminatory provisions and practices against women.

27. Business failure is widely explained by a lack of training in management and technology. Lacking networks, lacking specific and complementary courses directed to them, and lacking time because of family responsibilities, women have less opportunity to gain access to existing training services.

Furthermore, in many cases courses are not directed to the sectors in which women are active.

28. In a global context, in many countries, national development policies have been biased towards large public and private enterprises, while the micro- and smaller-sized enterprises of the economy, have been marginalized. The concept of small- and medium-sized enterprises needs to be redefined. For example, the informal sector in Africa has been recognized by the African Development Bank as a major source of entrepreneurial talent that, in small businesses, could drive and sustain the growth of a private sector in Africa. 3/

29. There are few "old girl" networks that support, encourage, and advise neophyte women entrepreneurs, and male-dominated associations are usually not women-friendly. The importance of role models and mentors in the decision to become an entrepreneur and in the growth of an enterprise has been widely reported by most experts.

30. Today, women entrepreneurs face important challenges. They need to expand beyond low-skilled, easy-entry, low-margin businesses to more lucrative and more productive activities. They also need to make their voices heard by making their money talk. Finally they need to expand the pool of women entrepreneurs so as to increase their economic clout.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10, chap. I, sect. A.

2/ Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT), version 3, 1994.

3/ African Development Bank/African Development Fund, "Policy paper on women in development" (Addis Ababa, 1990).

Annex

REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON WOMEN AND ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING

New York, 7-11 November 1994

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Annex

I. PREAMBLE

1. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the world is experiencing a period of profound and rapid change. Borders are shifting, communication gaps are shrinking, and new roles are being defined for Governments, institutions and individuals. Whether or not their contributions are visible, women are driving forces - and sometimes the leaders - in these changes. The participation of women in economic systems is not a proposition, but a reality; not a choice, but an economic necessity. Women's resources need to be fully mobilized and the full potential of their contribution needs to be tapped if transformational and people-oriented change is to be brought about globally and locally.

2. Governments around the world are changing their roles. Many have been forced to scale down. Some have begun to adopt the roles of policy shapers, catalysts and priority-sector funders, but many public-sector structures remain rigid, bureaucratic and unresponsive to economic change and societal needs. In most of the national and international organizations responsible for economic decision-making, women have yet to assume leadership roles.

3. It is critical that women, individually and collectively, assume positions of power on boards and as managers, in business and banking entities. This will allow them to influence the direction of the huge resources controlled by large private entities and have a voice in shaping our world's values. Women's meaningful participation in strategic decision-making is good for women as well as for organizations, business and society.

4. Women are entering the ranks of management in public and private organizations and corporations at a time when their contribution can be crucial. But they are not advancing as quickly as they should. Self-employed managers and top-level women employed in organizations operate within different frameworks of barriers and opportunities, but their functions and roles in economic decision-making overlap and are potentially synergistic.

5. Macroeconomic policies have created barriers and opportunities for women in the market. Jobs in export manufacturing have opened up, but wage levels are often low and have not appreciably improved women's economic position. On the other hand, as jobs in the formal economy have started to yield only marginal or disappointing income, more women are seeking alternatives through new channels. Measures are still needed to fully reflect women's economic and non-economic contributions.

6. As large organizations in the public and private sectors scale down, women in smaller firms are increasingly filling gaps as sources of innovation, employment and economic growth. For low-income women, self employment and micro enterprises are often the only available ways to survive and gain some incremental income. Often, however, survival activities evolve into enterprises that provide a source of employment as well as family income. Women at all economic levels are starting their own businesses, in the belief that these

organizations can better reflect their life-styles and values and be more flexible in responding to society's needs.

7. Making over 80 per cent of the world's household purchasing decisions, women have tremendous power as consumers, which has hitherto been underplayed. They are organizing consumer groups and influencing the demand for products, production processes and economic policy. As new values shape the global context, women are likely to have a stronger voice in emerging sectors such as environmentally friendly products and human services.

8. Women are asserting themselves as economic actors and organizing for change. Gradually, they are moving into key decision-making positions in national and international bodies and in businesses and enterprises. They are beginning to play an important role in shaping the global economy.

9. In order to assume a more meaningful economic leadership role for the twenty-first century, women will need to be equipped with the opportunities, skills, support and latitude to exercise their vision and talents. In the body of this report, three main areas of action in this direction are outlined:

(a) Building women in leadership and management roles;

(b) Transforming enterprises and financial systems;

(c) Women as economic actors, organizing for visibility and change.

10. Women's economic participation and power are of pivotal importance. Women's larger incomes translate directly into better health, education and welfare for their families. Economic clout translates into political clout and social change. Women's economic participation and power would give women more control and confidence to deal with environmental devastation, poverty, violence, and peace in their world.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Women as leaders and managers

1. Areas of opportunity

11. Women are entering the ranks of management at a time of unprecedented opportunities and unparalleled risks. As the role of Governments diminishes in many countries, women in the public sector face the possibility of losing their jobs. As international organizations and large private companies reorganize, women in positions perceived as less essential are threatened with redundancy. In an era of streamlining, positions are being cut even at the highest level, and competition for executive positions is intense.

12. In virtually all organizations - public or private, large or small, national or international, rural or urban - women are entering the lower ranks of management but rarely advancing to the top. They represent an estimated 40 per cent of the workforce, but less than 20 per cent of management, and

6 per cent or less of senior management. Horizontal distribution is skewed as well: female decision makers are concentrated in social rather than economic and line ministries, in non-strategic sectors, and in staff and administrative rather than line and professional management positions. Rates of participation are growing slowly in government, national and transnational corporations, financial institutions and the international political and economic decision-making bodies.

13. When women do rise to high positions, their potential is underutilized. Organizations are beginning to recognize the value of women's approaches to management and decision-making, but the majority still do not fully benefit from women's unique skills and approaches. Women are not given the training and support they need to move into management positions, and invisible barriers ("glass walls") cut them off from the informal and formal networks that they need to be effective and advance within organizations.

14. Women are overcoming considerable obstacles as they move into decision-making positions. Tradition and stereotyping direct girls away from economics, technology, planning and other subjects that prepare them for professional and management careers. Entry and advancement are constrained in a male-controlled working world, where the traits considered desirable for management - aggressiveness, competitiveness, drive - perpetuate gender biases in values, recruitment, placement, evaluation and promotion. With lack of accountability and transparency in procedures, bases for appeal and redress are limited. As women advance, they are further disadvantaged by a lack of career counselling, leadership training, role models or a critical mass of senior-level women who could provide guidance ("mentoring"), and contribute to the creation of networks and advocacy groups.

15. Policies and legislation create a work environment that does not adequately value or support women. Equal opportunity programmes and equal-pay-for-equal-work laws have been put in place in many countries but often without strong oversight and enforcement. Wage gaps continue to be an issue, even at the highest corporate levels. Progress in providing leave, day care, flexible working arrangements and other supports is still insufficient to allow women (or men) to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

16. Women have considerable potential to increase their power and organize for collective action and change. Effectiveness depends on gaining access to more comparative data, current information on management, and existing formal and informal networks. At the same time, women need to develop their own groups and associations, within and across organizations, and a stronger advocacy voice, through greater representation in trade unions, employment associations and other collective bargaining groups. Female leaders in business and government need to reach beyond the economic community as well and forge partnerships with women in politics so as to leverage policy and legislative change.

2. Increasing women's access to decision-making roles and their effectiveness

17. Women are not moving into strategic decision-making areas and positions as quickly as they should. Even though more women have entered the pipeline, it will take years for natural progression to alter significantly numbers at the

top. Concerted efforts are needed to build critical mass, which is crucial for creating spheres of influence and networks. Support from top executives and policy makers in government and business is needed to demonstrate the seriousness of commitment to advancing women but is insufficient without action, follow-up, incentives for action and sanctions for inaction. Although there are questions about the efficacy of affirmative action programmes and quotas, their utility as a catalyst and an institutional conscience is considerable.

18. Women are proving that with adequate training and support, they not only perform well but may be better suited to modern management. Female managers should be seen as competitive assets to organizations rather than a legislated necessity. Many private-sector companies are already adopting creative and innovative management styles associated with women: less hierarchical, more people- and process-oriented, sensitive to societal needs. Recognition of such contributions needs to be generalized to the rest of the private sector, the public sector and international organizations.

3. Transforming organizational systems

19. Increasing numbers will not effect sustainable change, unless they are backed by a responsive organizational environment and a vigilant legal base to ensure accountability and transparency. Transformation of organizational structures and cultures is needed to remove permanently gender biases in policies, rules and behavioural norms. In moving to a gender-neutral set of standards, statements of vision and mission, corporate values, organization of work and outputs are likely to change. Organizations need to look beyond numbers - to policies and actions that change the basic conditions of employment, create a work environment that is more responsive to women's needs and multiple roles, and provide incentives for encouraging women's advancement and contribution. Gender-sensitive training in public and private companies can help men not only recognize the contribution of women but internalize and adopt women's values and approaches and share the responsibility for addressing gender issues and promoting change.

4. Strategic objectives and actions

20. Governments and international institutions should lead the way in eradicating barriers to women in management by intensifying efforts to improve their own staff composition and work environment. Members of the United Nations system should develop equal opportunity policies, guidelines, action plans, monitoring mechanisms and oversight units plus a full programme for reconciling work and family responsibilities. The Fourth World Conference provides them with an opportunity to re-examine the targets set by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990 to determine whether they provide a valid framework for the near term. When targets are set, they should be realistic, enforceable and tailored to the organization.

21. Governments can create a supportive environment for the advancement of women in decision-making by developing, in cooperation with women's organizations and labour groups, national affirmative action policies, programmes, monitoring mechanisms and oversight bodies such as equal opportunity programmes and special commissions. Governments should provide clear guidance

in the setting of quotas and targets necessary to create a critical mass of women at all levels. Governments should create, where they do not exist, and empower, where they do exist, regulatory bodies and enforcement mechanisms as a means of eliminating barriers to women's advancement.

22. Organizational action should not depend on legislation. Public and private organizations and corporations at the national, regional and international levels should have in place by the year 2000 a full programme of actions to support women's professional development and advancement (policy statement, action plan, focal points, monitoring and advisory groups, measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities).

5. Increasing access to decision-making

23. Government policies and programmes should promote universal primary education, encourage girls' participation in education through the secondary and tertiary levels, and encourage orientation of girls towards professional and management-oriented subjects.

24. Sources of guidance and counselling for parents and children on educational and professional choices need to be expanded by involving a wider range of resources, including business and professional associations, women's non-governmental organizations, and ministries of labour, education and women. Community, religious and other groups should be involved in comprehensive efforts to change perceptions about women's capabilities and roles.

25. Recruitment efforts by vocational, technical, commercial and other specialized institutes and by universities should be increased in order to attract young women to technological, value-added fields. Government and individual institutions should adopt measures to increase the intake of women at the tertiary level (e.g., quotas, subsidies). Private and public institutions (universities, management institutes), in partnership with government and private corporations, should make active efforts to attract women for management training programmes.

26. Whether or not legislation is passed, public and private organizations should be pressed to alter rules, regulations and conditions of employment to be more responsive to women. Private and public companies and Governments should reassess their practices for selection of political appointees, special officers and board members to ensure greater representation of women. Labour and women's groups should lobby for policies to ensure:

(a) Gender-unbiased hiring criteria, affirmative placement and retention measures (e.g., incentives to hire women);

(b) Transparent recruitment, hiring, placement evaluation and promotion procedures;

(c) Monitoring and oversight of progress.

27. Regulations that create structural barriers to women's advancement should be revised. For example, all agencies - international institutions in

particular - should remove obstacles to women's mobility where promotion depends on relocation (e.g., assistance with spouse employment).

6. Increasing women's effectiveness in decision-making

28. All public, private and international organizations should equalize opportunities for on-the-job career development and specialized training. Multinational corporations should design and implement programmes for women in management positions where they operate. Government, private corporations and international agencies should promote participatory leadership training for women in existing or newly created institutes. In cases where scholarships are awarded, a policy of targeting at least 50 per cent to women should be adopted, and leave arrangements to balance career and family obligations should be made.

29. Comprehensive efforts are needed to restructure in-service training programmes. Public and private firms, in collaboration with training providers, should develop structured on-the-job learning opportunities to prepare women specifically for higher-level management positions. They also should seek assistance in designing new staff refresher courses that reflect the leadership and management styles of women.

30. Women executives and leaders should make active efforts to assist other women in moving into high decision-making positions. Women managers, with the assistance of personnel officers, should design in-house activities to develop management skills (leadership tracking, "mentoring", career counselling and coaching programmes). Where possible, institutions should draw on the experience of public and private corporations which have been successful in these areas. Women's professional associations should provide counselling and work closely with women-owned businesses and female executives to help identify employment opportunities at higher levels and to increase representation of women in appointed as well as career positions. Women executives in multinational corporations should work with women's groups to increase women's participation in senior management at headquarters and in subsidiaries.

31. Employers and trade union leaders should support the increase of women's collective bargaining power through greater involvement of women in decision-making positions in trade unions, employee associations and in negotiation of labour policies and legislation.

32. Within organizations and professional associations, there is a need to develop access to information. Women executives should take the lead in helping to set up internal newsletters and exchanges of information across organizations.

33. Senior women in politics, business, management and education should develop stronger linkages and form professional women's associations for support, advocacy and lobbying. International professional associations and non-governmental organizations should become involved, where appropriate, in assisting in the formation of women's business groups.

7. Transforming organizations

34. Strong statements of support from leaders of government and public and private corporations are critical. If such support is not forthcoming, women's employee and professional groups, international agencies and the media should press for it. Policy statements should be followed up as soon as possible by concrete action plans that build in baseline studies, timed actions, indicators for evaluation, and creation of advisory and oversight units.

35. Employers should provide gender-sensitive training for men and women which promotes unbiased working relationships and integrates alternative work and management styles.

36. In order to capture rapid changes in the work place, personnel and equal-opportunity officers should encourage development of task forces linking public and private-sector organizations, to provide feedback on progress and exchange experiences.

37. At the governmental level, legislative directives should be given to promote programmes to balance work and family for both men and women. In all workplaces, a comprehensive agenda of measures should be adopted, including the provision of adequate parental leave with obligatory paternal leave; flexible working hours and alternative working arrangements; adequate day-care facilities or support. Permanent task forces on the quality of life should be set up within companies, to provide ongoing feedback.

B. Women transforming enterprises and financial systems

1. Areas of opportunity

38. Millions of women of all economic levels are taking the lead in building enterprises. Women entrepreneurs, operating in rural and urban areas, have demonstrated their capacity to save, repay loans, and build income and assets. Yet, women operating enterprises of all sizes face problems with access to finance, information and markets. Access problems relate to women's relatively low incomes, lack of assets, and the small size of their businesses, as well as gender. Women also face problems with laws and customs which deny them property rights and credit access. While women entrepreneurs can be found in all sectors, many focus on commerce and services and in low growth products and markets. Many women begin their enterprises in order to survive, and need to build their confidence, financial management, technical capacities, and marketing links, if the enterprises are to grow.

2. Transforming financial systems and building linkages

39. All women need access to credit and savings services in order to become economically self-sufficient. Credit and savings services are particularly central to the ability of women entrepreneurs to increase their income and assets. Financial systems and institutions need to be reshaped if women are going to gain access to the lending services they need in order to survive, build incomes and assets, and create enterprises that contribute to economic

growth and social change. Most of the millions of women in small and micro businesses lack access to financial services from traditional banking institutions. The culture and cost structure of traditional banks makes them uninterested in making small loans. Poverty-oriented banks, business non-governmental organizations and other specialized financial intermediaries have shown that financial services can be provided to low-income women entrepreneurs on a sustainable basis. Women in small and medium-sized business need venture capital, access to term loans for equipment, and a range of banking services. Traditional and new financial institutions need to respond to these needs. Governments and external funders need to give priority attention to financing the structures that support women-owned enterprises.

40. Experience demonstrates that well-designed business development services - training, advisory, technology, and commercial linkage services - are as important as money if women entrepreneurs are going to move beyond survival levels and play dynamic roles in local and global economies. For women in micro and small enterprises, training in cash and credit management, confidence-building, and the technical skills to expand their enterprises are particularly important. Marketing strategies, market exposure and commercial linkages will be of critical importance if women entrepreneurs are going to build value in traditional sectors, move into growth sectors, and expand their participation in export markets. Well-designed training and advisory services provided by non-governmental organizations and enterprise associations will be important. Linkages among women entrepreneurs from different sized enterprises and different economic levels will be critical in know-how transfer and enterprise networks.

3. Strategic objectives and actions

41. Governments and international financial institutions should provide a conducive environment to encourage women-owned enterprises by restructuring policies. By supporting private institutions such as non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, credit unions and grass-roots organizations that have the capacities to reach women in rural and urban areas, these institutions will open women's access to finance, markets and technology.

42. Business non-governmental organizations, specialized financial intermediaries, cooperatives, credit unions and women's groups should play leading roles in providing finance and business services, particularly to low-income women entrepreneurs. Those women's organizations that cut across economic groups will need to use their influence to change processes and practices of traditional banks to open women's access.

43. Women face many cultural barriers that need to be overcome in designing policies, programmes and specific services, such as norms on "appropriate" sectors for women, the undervaluing of women's economic activities, and undermining women's confidence. Intermediary organizations should provide confidence and capability-building services for women.

44. All ministries should expand their roles as advocates for women's economic issues and ensure gender sensitivity in all sectoral policies, budgets and programmes. All ministries need to build forums, in partnership with women's

organizations and grass-roots groups, to ensure that the voices of self-employed women and women entrepreneurs are heard by Governments and bank policy makers. They should also encourage the media to feature women as active economic agents.

45. Governments, banks and external funders need to give priority attention to a major expansion in resources for women-owned enterprises and for the financial and business development organizations that serve them.

4. Transforming financial systems

46. Women should be able to receive credit in their own right and should be entitled to hold land and other assets. Governments should enact legislation that removes barriers to women's economic participation, particularly as they relate to property rights, other asset holding, inheritance laws, labour and zoning laws.

47. Finance ministries and central banks should enable and encourage the organizational and structural changes in financial systems that are needed if women entrepreneurs and producers are to be reached, by:

(a) Ensuring stable conditions in the financial system;

(b) Enabling and encouraging a wide range of solid, responsive institutions to enter and participate in small and micro enterprising financing. This includes banks, non-governmental organizations, credit unions and women's groups;

(c) Reallocating a large portion of governmental and external funding to successful institutions that reach women entrepreneurs. These are investments, not expenditures;

(d) Making sure that these institutions are capitalized, eligible for refinance, and receive adequate institutional development support;

(e) Encouraging linkages between formal financial institutions and non-governmental organizations in leveraged bank/non-governmental organization credit lines.

48. Financial intermediaries that seek outside funds - capitalization, institutional development and commercial loan funds - should meet high standards of performance and have credible plans for sustainable operations and significant impact. Keys standards are: excellent repayment, unsubsidized loan rates, substantial progress towards self-sufficiency, market penetration for significant outreach, credit-related training, sound institutional operations, strong direct and indirect savings mobilizations, and a growing capital structure. Capitalization is key if financial intermediaries are to build the basis for self-sustaining services through investing, building loan portfolios and using capital to leverage funds from the local banking system.

49. Financial intermediaries and women's groups should be supported in their programmes to expand saving mobilization services for women and for opening women's access to finance as consumers as well as entrepreneurs.

50. Commercial banks need to recognize the market potential of women in the small and micro-enterprise sector. Commercial banks should learn about the experience of those banks and other intermediaries that have realized healthy profits from small and micro-enterprise lending. Banks and financial institutions should structure services to reach sizeable markets comprised of businesses run by women. These markets can be reached by hiring more women, setting up special business units, establishing "storefront" branches, and adapting consumer loan technologies for small and medium business loans.

51. National development banks should:

(a) Expand wholesale lending to those institutions that meet performance standards, including non-traditional institutions with demonstrated capacity to reach women entrepreneurs;

(b) Motivate and encourage the local banking sector to lend to women in micro and small enterprises;

(c) Publicize success stories, organize exchange among leading practitioners, and facilitate gender-sensitivity training of managers and officers of retail-level financial intermediaries;

(d) Provide refinance to a wide range of institutions;

(e) Channel capitalization to competent retail intermediaries;

(f) Fund measures by retail institutions in strengthening their capacity to serve the financing requirements of women in small and micro enterprises.

52. Multilateral, bilateral and private funders should provide flexible funding - including funds for both institutional development and equity - to qualified financial intermediaries of all sizes that meet high standards of performance and that are positioned to expand their scale and reach. Funders should provide financial and other support in a form that fosters a move to financial self-sufficiency. Multilateral funders should encourage recipient Governments to allocate a greater portion of their national budgets to private-sector organizations providing finance and business services to women's enterprises. This funding should be recognized as a productive investment, not a social expenditure.

5. Building capabilities and commercial links

53. Enterprise associations, business non-governmental organizations, and national training institutes should expand those need-based training, advisory and mentoring programmes that have proven effective in giving women entrepreneurs what they need. This includes basic cash and credit management skills, building women's confidence in expanding their businesses, technology improvement and transfer, technical skills, and encouraging commercial links involving women-owned businesses. Women also need advice on legal rights that relate to assets, land tenure and credit access. Particular attention should be given to effective outreach strategies targeting women from rural areas. These programmes should receive financial support from Governments and external

funders. Financing strategies for these business-development services should combine partial cost recovery with capitalization strategies that encourage the sustainability and growth of these programmes.

54. Innovative capability-building and commercial-links programmes should be encouraged, including apprenticeships and enterprise learning and network approaches that take training out of the classroom, mobilize entrepreneurs to train other entrepreneurs, and promote networks of enterprises.

55. Business development organizations should give particular attention to growth opportunities in sectors that add value and values; these include environmentally positive enterprises, food-processing and health-related businesses. Particular efforts also should be directed at building women's ownership roles in product and service areas with strong growth prospects.

56. Governments should set policies, fund programmes and play catalytic roles Governments should rely on and support private-sector organizations that provide direct financial and other business services to women entrepreneurs. Rather than implement direct financial and business development services, women's ministries should be active as advocates for women's economic issues and should coordinate and integrate women's concerns into sectoral and interministerial policies, budgets and programmes.

57. International networks of women's organizations should be encouraged to develop mentoring, joint venture, technical and commercial linkages between women-owned enterprises within regions and globally. These initiatives should also receive the support of government and international funders.

58. Large multinational and local corporations should be encouraged to play an active role in the promotion of women-owned businesses, by building positive subcontracting linkages.

C. Women as economic actors organizing for visibility and change

1. Areas of opportunity

59. To be truly empowered economic actors, women need to break out of isolation and organize into effective groups to influence local and national government, bank policies and resource flows, the media, and the social fabric as a whole. Women need to look beyond their immediate environments to create networks cutting across sectoral and professional boundaries and national borders and so create new opportunities.

60. Women should take action individually and collectively by using their economic power as workers, consumers, voters, managers, executives and entrepreneurs. Women need to organize into effective pressure groups to increase their influence and build joint economic activities. Women should use their talents and creativity in group activities to organize around economic issues and use their combined economic power to affect societal values.

61. The preparation and dissemination of gender disaggregated data and research are vital in building an awareness of women's contributions as economic actors, in monitoring resource flows to and from women, and in highlighting gaps between policies and practices affecting women managers and entrepreneurs.

2. Strategic objectives and actions

62. All women should be encouraged to use their vote to increase the number of women in parliaments and municipal councils and to advocate for the election and appointment to policy decision-making positions of men and women who will represent women's economic and political interests.

63. Alliances should be built with women parliamentarians, women's networks in ministries and corporations and with activists at the grass-roots level. Pressure groups should be created at all levels to influence decision makers about the contribution of women managers and entrepreneurs to national economies, and make them responsive to the talents and expertise of these women in order to ensure their effectiveness.

64. Mechanisms should be created at the national and international levels to ensure transparency and to monitor the performance, commitment and accountability of Governments; national, regional and international financial institutions; and internationally funded programmes.

65. Women should participate in the leadership structures of organizations currently run by men, such as chambers of commerce and industry, trade organizations, employers' organizations and cooperatives.

66. The creation of women's consumers' associations should be supported so as to ensure that decision and policy makers will create an enabling environment for women managers and entrepreneurs, and to monitor the macroeconomic direction towards people-centred goals.

3. Women's managerial and entrepreneurial organizations

67. Women's managerial and entrepreneurial organizations should forge alliances with other women's organizations so as to put pressure on the public and private sectors. Pressure should be focused on women's representational parity in all economic decision-making forums, such as chambers of commerce, employers' organizations, trade associations and workers' organizations.

68. Women's organizations, locally and globally, should develop networks of partnership and sponsorship, leading to a pooling of their human resources so as to ensure synergy in their decision-making activities.

69. Women's organizations should lobby for greater women's involvement and gender consideration in regional and international economic groupings, institutions and trade liberalization schemes.

70. The efforts of individuals and associations should be directed at strengthening North/South linkages at all levels. Mechanisms need to be created to ensure that northern production and consumption do not have a negative impact

on southern producers. Senior women in multinational corporations and export-oriented industries should be made accountable for the treatment and working conditions of women workers.

71. Databases should be created by women's managerial and entrepreneurial organizations, documenting the challenges, opportunities and success stories of women managers and entrepreneurs, to encourage information-sharing, lateral learning and positive role models.

72. Women managers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders should encourage governmental purchases and contracts to be directed to women-owned businesses.

73. Women working in family enterprises should be made more visible, and pressure should be exerted on the Government for legislation protecting their legal and financial rights.

4. Women micro-entrepreneurs

74. Women micro-entrepreneurs should create collective ventures to increase their economic impact in the community and forge links with larger women's business organizations so as to gain access to local and international markets.

75. Rural self-employed women and micro-entrepreneurs at the survival level should organize to gain access to technical linkages such as technology and skill transfer, credit, workshops, materials, markets and marketing channels, and adequate social security coverage. Where possible, local governments, non-governmental organizations, employers' and workers' organizations, and women's groups should be enlisted to assist in this organizing.

5. Media

76. To make women's economic contribution visible, in particular that of rural women, Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations should develop public information strategies. These media strategies should include the utilization of media materials such as films, documentaries, photographic exhibitions, magazines, newspaper articles and fact sheets. These products would be disseminated through all available media outlets, including international electronic networks, radio and television broadcast systems.

77. Corporations, Governments, non-profit organizations, and women's organizations should be encouraged to fund a major communications programme featuring women as economic actors with new sets of values that are changing the world. Economic forums or world caucuses should be formed for women leaders in all sectors, on building statements and actions that reflect women's vision of value-centred economies.

78. A public information service should be created to develop new messages affirming women's business acumen and contribution to their communities and redefining women's success in economic and value terms. Awards should be established for journalists reporting on women's economic and managerial contributions.

6. Organizing for visibility

79. Databases should be developed highlighting potential women role models in all sectors, such as business, arts, fashion, politics, public administration, sports, environment, home-making, farming, teaching and community activism.

80. The presence of women economic leaders from all regions and economic levels at the Fourth World Conference should be used strategically to begin building a database on women's contributions and innovations.

81. Gender-disaggregated data are needed to understand the magnitude of women's economic contribution and the gaps between policies and practices. International guidelines must be developed on women's economic roles as entrepreneurs, savers, consumers, managers and decision makers, and on their access to productive resources and decision-making. These guidelines must be used in the collection of data.

82. Statistics and indicators need to be developed to monitor and measure women's contributions in various economic settings - formal and informal, rural and urban. These would include:

(a) Financial flows involving women - savings, lending and investments - by financial institutions and Governments;

(b) Women's roles in key economic positions, such as senior managers of public and private corporations at all levels, women entrepreneurs, members of boards of trade unions, employers' organizations, professional and entrepreneurial organizations, cooperatives, and senior executives of main public institutions dealing with economic matters.

83. Statistical terms should be leveraged and modified to accurately reflect women's economic contributions. Examples include defining the informal sector, measuring unpaid work, and making demarcations of data within different sectors of economic activity.

84. Mechanisms at the national and international levels, including financial institutions, should be created to monitor, evaluate and record the collection, dissemination and use of these key economic indicators.

85. Institutions at the national and international levels should be committed to and willing to fund the collection and compilation of gender-disaggregated data. This includes the collection of statistics in industrial, agricultural and labour-force surveys. Legislative and administrative mandates and budgetary support need to be provided to national statistical offices and research institutions for undertaking the necessary data-gathering, analyses and dissemination.

7. Information strategies

86. Public information efforts on behalf of women have tended to be ad hoc, lacking in consistency, intersectoral coordination and strategic design. Information needs to be produced and disseminated readily and effectively to

make women's economic contribution widely recognized at the national and international levels. The national Governments, international organizations and non-governmental bodies concerned should develop public information strategies to make women's economic contribution visible at all levels.

8. Research

87. A great deal of research is needed to support the effort to clarify conceptual definitions; to identify valid and reliable indicators; and to develop and test effective information strategies. It is also necessary to delineate the structure, pattern and process of economic decision-making in order for women effectively to relate to it and use it. These research projects should be promoted by university centres; research institutes; centres for women and gender studies; academic and practitioners' groups studying leadership, management and entrepreneurship; governmental offices such as ministries of commerce, labour and industry; the private chambers of commerce and industry and other organizations.

88. International organizations need to develop adequate approaches and methods to provide technical support for comparative research between countries and regions.

89. Governments, universities, private institutions, and international organizations should take the initiative and the responsibility for funding research on all aspects related to constraints and opportunities for women in business and management.

90. Recommended research topics include:

(a) Women in management: women's position by industry, functional area and level, gender bias in companies' policies and practices of recruitment and retention; development and advancement of women in managerial and executive positions; mechanisms in terms of communication and control networks of companies that lessen women's chances of occupying "line" positions; pay inequities for work of equal or comparable value in unfriendly corporate cultures; and lack of policies of balancing family and work in the workplace;

(b) Women in business: social, organizational and cultural factors affecting women business owners' access to information, markets, technology, financial services and credit; gender bias in governmental procedures and policies, as well as in non-governmental agencies specialized in providing financial, services and credit; constraints on women's participation and access to decision-making positions in employers' organizations;

(c) Performance analyses of successful women entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas that take into account economic, behavioural and attitudinal effects on family and social status;

(d) Female participation in the management of regional, national and international economic organizations, institutions and trade blocs;

(e) The impact on women's entrepreneurial and managerial activities of new globalization, export-oriented development policies in their roles as producers and consumers, as well as social reproduction;

(f) Women's participation in family firms and patriarchal factors intervening in women's access to decision-making in assets-holding in family-owned businesses;

(g) The impact of women in decision-making positions on their communities.